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SUBJECT: TURKEY: CODEL WARNER WITH PM ERDOGAN

REF: ANKARA 1623

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Senator John Warner led a six-member Senate Armed Services Committee delegation to Turkey on Feb. 23 for meetings with the Parliament (reftel) and Prime Minister Erdogan. (Note: Complete delegation list provided at para. 8) The delegation emphasized the importance of the bilateral relationship, welcomed Turkey's support for the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, and urged Turkey to consider what more it could do for Iraq. PM Erdogan thanked the USG for its support of Turkey's EU candidacy; listed Turkey's continuing concerns in Iraq and its contributions to the Coalition effort there; expressed frustration at PKK attacks in Turkey emanating from northern Iraq and said the Government of Turkey (GOT) still expects action against this terrorist group. Erdogan emphasized that an Iraqi referendum on Kirkuk must be nationwide and warned that passage of a US Congressional resolution on Armenia would negatively impact relations. END SUMMARY.

CONTINUED CONCERNS ABOUT IRAQ

¶2. (SBU) Erdogan opened the meeting by saying that our strategic interests and common values would keep the bilateral relationship strong and noted Turkey's appreciation for the US support of Turkey's EU candidacy. Highlighting the importance of our joint efforts in the war against terrorism, Erdogan voiced concern about the increasing violence between Iraqi religious and ethnic groups. For the first time, he said, Iraqi political leaders are talking about civil war; the threat of civil war could separate the country. Erdogan reiterated Turkey's five long-standing desires for Iraq: 1) territorial integrity of the country; 2) control of natural resources by the national government; 3) no domination of any one religious group over the others; 4) no domination of any one ethnic group over the others; 5) special status for Kirkuk. All of these issues, he contended, could be protected under the constitution, but none of them were reflected in the new constitutional law. The Prime Minister described Kirkuk as the critical issue in Iraq and stated that any referendum on Kirkuk should be held at the national level and monitored by the UN.

¶3. (SBU) Erdogan enumerated Turkey's logistical support contributions to the Coalition effort in Iraq since 2005 as follows:

- trained 54 Iraqi military officers

- provided 4 Turkish officials to the NATO Training Mission Iraq headquarters
- permitted 9,323 planes to transit Turkey on the way to Iraq
- permitted 2,764 logistics flights to deliver supplies to Iraq
- permitted the departure of 780 planes from Turkey to Iraq
- permitted 862 takers to be refueled
- provided 270 MW of electricity
- facilitated the transit of 4,000 trucks and vehicles to Iraq through Habur Gate.

Politically, Erdogan said, Turkey has also pressed for full participation by all ethnic groups in the various elections and invited ethnic leaders to Turkey to meet with US Ambassador Khalilzad in a neutral environment. Senator Warner welcomed Turkey's support for the US military in Iraq and urged the GOT's continued efforts for an independent, democratic Iraq, asking pointedly if there are other ways that Turkey can contribute. He asked for a list in writing of Turkey's contributions that could be shared with other Senators (Note: which the Prime Ministry subsequently provided. End Note.).

¶4. (SBU) Senator Levin thanked Turkey for its current support in Iraq and Afghanistan and urged pointed public statements on the need for all groups to compromise. He responded to PM Erdogan's concern about a possible civil war by saying that, despite initial internal USG disagreement about the Iraq war, everyone is now committed to do everything to ensure our success. He agreed that the partition of Iraq would be a disaster, not just for Turkey but for the world.

¶5. (SBU) Senators Levin and Salazar echoed Senator Warner in asking the Prime Minister if there is more that Turkey can do to help. Erdogan noted that Turkey had done other things, including orchestrating nine meetings of Iraq's neighbors to coordinate support. A tenth meeting is being planned, but, he agreed, that is not enough. Turkey's relationship with Iraq is special because of familial and tribal ties and it can do more. Senator Salazar called the insurgency a big impediment to democracy in Iraq and urged Turkey to fight it together with the US. Senator Bingaman asked Erdogan what Turkey knows about Iranian influence in the formation of the government, underscoring that this would be of significant concern.

STILL LOOKING FOR ACTION AGAINST THE PKK

¶6. (SBU) Erdogan expressed frustration about the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) terrorists who conduct attacks against Turkey from camps in northern Iraq. Many European countries and the US have labeled the PKK a terrorist organization, but no action has been taken against them, he said. They have impunity in northern Iraq and turn national Turkish holidays into "bloody days." Erdogan ended by stating that Turkey still expects action against the PKK. Senator Warner agreed that fighting terrorism is not the responsibility of any one country, but is a shared international responsibility. Senator Levin added that the PKK problem will be worse if Iraq is divided. Quoting the US military, he said there can be no military solution without a political solution. To get there, all parties must be persuaded.

NO "SUMMARY EXECUTION" ON ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

¶7. (SBU) Erdogan stated flatly that an Armenian Genocide resolution "will impact our relationship." In his view, Armenians have yet to recognize Turkey's "goodwill". Turkey has opened its archives and invited third countries and Armenia to do the same so that policy specialists, archeologists, historians and others could study the issue together, but Armenia never responded to the invitation. Lobbying activities, said Erdogan, don't help, and Turkey will not accept a "summary execution" on this issue. He stated his belief that the US Senate would continue to demonstrate sensitivity on this issue. Senator Warner

responded that there are two sides to every story but agreed that history will be the judge. Warner said that, for his part, he focused his efforts on the men and women fighting today.

Senate Armed Services Committee Delegation

18. (U) Senator John Warner (R-VA), Chairman
Senator Carl Levin (D-MD)
Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL)
Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)
Senator Craig Thomas (R-WY)
Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO)

19. (U) The delegation did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.

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